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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/623,011	07/17/2003	Yasushi Kojima	NGW-009	4612
959	7590	11/15/2006	EXAMINER	
LAHIVE & COCKFIELD, LLP ONE POST OFFICE SQUARE BOSTON, MA 02109-2127			LEE, CYNTHIA K	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1745	

DATE MAILED: 11/15/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/623,011

Applicant(s)

KOJIMA ET AL.

Examiner

Cynthia Lee

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 26 July 2006.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-6 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-6 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 7/24/2006.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

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DETAILED ACTION

This Office Action is responsive to the amendment filed on 7/26/2006 and the response to the Restriction requirement filed 9/15/2006. Claims 1-6 are pending.

Claims 1 and 4 have been amended.

The 35 USC 112, 2nd paragraph rejection has been withdrawn.

The Restriction requirement has been withdrawn.

Claims 1-6 are finally rejected for reasons of record and for reasons necessitated by applicant's amendment.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102/103

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Boehm (US 6461751).

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Boehm discloses a method and an apparatus for operating a fuel cell. Boehm discloses a hydrogen sensor that comprises monitoring a cathode exhaust stream downstream of the cathode to detect hydrogen gas concentration (applicant's operating state detecting unit) and decreasing oxidant stoichiometry (applicant's protecting unit) when the hydrogen gas concentration is less than a threshold concentration (applicant's memory unit and abnormal state determining unit). (5:1-20) (applicant's claims 1 and 4). Boehm also discloses that if the oxidant stream mass flow rate is less than the desired flow rate, the device includes increasing the oxidant flow rate (5:45-52), thus causing a difference in the supply flow rate of the reaction gases. Boehm's system also comprises decreasing the pressure of the fuel stream when the system detects that the hydrogen gas concentration is increasing (6:33-40), thus causing a difference in the pressure between the reaction gases at the anode and the cathode.

Boehm discloses that when the hydrogen gas concentration is less than a first threshold concentration, the oxidant supply is decreased. Likewise, when the hydrogen gas concentration is higher than a second threshold, the oxidant supply is increased accordingly. This is indicative of actual or potential oxidant starvation (5:5-10). The Examiner notes that Boehm's hydrogen sensor inherently functions "wherein the determination threshold value decreases when a loaded state of the fuel cell decreases" because the hydrogen concentration would naturally increase/decrease as the fuel cell's performance increases/decreases. Thus, the hydrogen threshold concentration would be based on either the first or the second threshold value depending on the current hydrogen concentration. As the loaded fuel cell state decreases, the hydrogen

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concentration would naturally decrease and would depend on the first threshold concentration should the hydrogen concentration fall below the first threshold concentration.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 7/26/2006 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Applicant argues that Boehm does not disclose "wherein the determination threshold value decreases when a loaded state of the fuel cell decreases".

However, Boehm has been found to read on the instant set of claims. See rejection above.

Conclusion

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of

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the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Cynthia Lee whose telephone number is 571-272-8699.

The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 8:30am-5pm.


If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick Ryan can be reached on 571-272-1292. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

ckl

Cynthia Lee

Patent Examiner


SUSY TSANG-FOSTER
PRIMARY EXAMINER